

Testimony of Joseph Wasserman of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

**Testimony in support of SB 27 AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S
RECYCLING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

My name is Joe Wasserman I am an organizer with Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice or CCEJ. I am here to speak in favor of SB 27 and for it's strengthening. CCEJ has been working for the phasing out of trash incineration in Hartford and our state. We also have been speaking out for expanding recycling and waste reduction alternatives.

Hartford is the trash burning capital of the region, with the one of the largest incinerators in the nation. Trash is burned in Hartford 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, releasing toxins into the air we breathe. This disproportionately impacts Low Income Communities of Color that are in close proximity to trash incineration in both Hartford and Bridgeport.

The Hartford City Council passed a resolution in February of 2012 calling for a reduction in incineration and increasing recycling, waste reduction and composting alternatives. The resolution raises a strong concern about the toxins released by trash incineration and it's impact on the health of Hartford residents.

As long as there is a demand for waste by those who run trash incinerators, there is a built-in disincentive to fully move forward with recycling. The incinerator is always hungry for waste we should be recycling. What we burn we cannot recycle. The recycling rate for Connecticut is at about 25%. We lag behind Massachusetts which is estimated to be between 36% and 44%. The 75% recycling rate of San Francisco shows it is possible, if we are properly focused, to do much better. We fear that incineration is one of the factors preventing us from focusing on the need to increase recycling in our state.

CCEJ welcomes the placement of recycling goals into law, the repurposing of the Hartford incinerator and the provision for recycling education in SB27. We recommend that in addition to the goal of 60% recycling rate by 2024, a goal of 80% should be set for 2030, with a provision to set the goals even higher after review. We urge that there be a provision to require manufacturers to take responsibility for the recycling of their products.

It should be clearly spelled out that trash incineration should be replaced by recycling, reuse and waste reduction and not a new incinerator.